

# THE

MONTHLY



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**APRIL MEETING:** The twenty-seventh regular meeting of the Association will be held on Thursday evening, 10th inst., at 8 o'clock sharp, in the lecture hall of the California Development Board, Ferry Building.

Dr. William F. Badè, Honorary Member of the Association, will give an illustrated talk on the "Birds of the High Sierra."

Mr. Joseph J. Webb will relate some of his experiences while overseas.



**APRIL FIELD TRIP** will be taken to Lake Lagunitas on Sunday, 13th inst. Purchase return tickets for Ross and take Sausalito ferry leaving San Francisco at 8:45 a. m. About an eight-mile walk up the canyon and around the lake.



## PROCEEDINGS OF THE MARCH MEETING

The twenty-sixth regular meeting was held on March 13th, in the Ferry Building, President Lastreto in the chair. Mr. Kibbe reported progress in gathering a record of ordinances in force throughout the country, for the regulation of predatory cats. Mr. Douglas reported the rare occurrence of the killing of a canary by a sparrow hawk which found city forage for crickets insufficiently nourishing.

Dr. Harold C. Bryant, Honorary Member, then entertained the Association by the exhibition of an enlarged edition of the Salsbury moving pictures of wild life.

The Board of Directors met at 7:30, arranged for the Boy Scout lecture course and discussed financial affairs of the Association. Hon. Julius L. Kahn was elected to membership.



## OIL UPON THE WATERS

When this Association was but a month old, an important field of activity was opened up before it by a communication from Capt. H. W. Rhodes, Superintendent of Lighthouses in the Eighteenth District, transmitting a report of John Kunder, lighthouse keeper on the South Farallon, to the effect that the diving birds thereabouts, especially the murre, were threatened with extermination, being killed in large numbers by quantities of oil floating on the waters in that vicinity. This report was confirmed by another from Thomas Jobson, master of the lightship stationed ten miles off the Golden Gate, and all of these gentlemen expressed the highest solicitude for the welfare of the sea fowl which have been committed to their care by the action of the government in constituting the Farallones a bird refuge.

Similar appeals were made by the Bureau of Biological Survey to the California Fish and Game Commission and to the Cooper Ornithological Club.

The periodic occurrence of large sheets of floating oil on the waters of the ocean off our coast is due to the oil tankers returning to our port in ballast. To give stability to these vessels that come here to load, the tanks constructed to carry oil are filled with water, but they must in turn be emptied to make room for a new load of oil. A certain quantity of residue oil has inevitably remained in the tank with the ballast water, and both are discharged in the process of pumping out the ballast. To avoid polluting the waters of the bay, which would make them liable to prosecution by the State authorities, and to save time, those in command of some of these vessels begin to discharge their oily water ballast beyond the jurisdiction of our laws, limited to the statutory three miles.

It appeared that the only recourse was to appeal to the oil companies, owners of these steamers, and such action was taken by the above organization, apparently with satisfactory results, until recently when serious recurrences led Captain Rhodes again to suggest action by this Association. At the last meeting a committee consisting of Mr. C. B. Lastreto and Dr. B. W. Evermann, was commissioned to take action to prevent this evil if possible and to devise a permanent remedy if practicable. The large oil companies have been interviewed with the result that they gave their assurances that this harmful practice would be avoided when practicable. When necessary the tanks are only partially emptied by pumping from the bottom so as to retain the oil that floats on the top. Then, what is left in each tank, consisting mostly of the residue oil, is pumped into one tank, thereby preparing all the others to receive a new load of oil at the supply station with no loss of time. During the reloading, the mixed water and oil of the undischarged ballast is pumped on shore into settling tanks where the oil is recovered; incidentally effecting a saving of oil that in a measure compensates for the expense of the necessary installation. Unfortunately one company has not yet installed the necessary facilities for this operation, but there appears good reason to hope for action on its part as well.

Frequently quantities of oil cover large surfaces of the water and drift for days with the tides and current. The birds that find their livelihood on or below the water, swimming the surface or diving under, inevitably become so coated with oil that they are unable to fly or swim. "Eventually the bird dies, but whether from the effects of starvation or cold through the feathers on the breast being coated with oil, I am unable to say." (From the report of Master of light vessel No. 70.)

Reports have been received from oil stations and places of production, excepting such as were out of communication because of the war. It appears that conditions existing at the Farallon Islands have no parallel elsewhere. Most places reported a rigorous enforcement of laws and regulations forbidding the spilling of any oil in the neighborhood. At other places where there is an occasional or constant presence of oil, either there are no diving birds in the vicinity, or their destruction escaped the observation of our correspondents.

At Trinidad, B. W. I., where the oil constantly oozes from the bottom of the sea, water birds apparently escape its effects, except that pelicans are seen coated with oil to an extent that prevents them from flying. On a few occasions the oil wells in Burma got beyond control and the oil flowed down the Irrawaddy River, "and flooded certain limited areas with oil with considerable damage to whatever birds or animals were found in the waters of the flooded area." To the contrary, from reports from different persons at Tampico, where it appears that oil continually covers the waters of the Panuco River, and the waters of the Gulf into which it flows, "it is quite common for birds, such as ducks, gulls, etc., to be covered with oil, but that does not seem to retard their breeding." "Ducks, wild geese

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and turkeys abound in seemingly limitless numbers." On the other hand, harpooning of fish, which was formerly a great industry and sport, is a thing of the past, "and there is a noticeable absence of sharks."

The following excerpts are from letters from members of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds:

"With regard to your inquiries about sea-birds and oil, we have had a good deal of experience of it here, being on the Firth of Forth. In June, 1915, there was a very great mortality among the sea-birds, caused by oil on the top of the water, at that time the shore from the banks of the Bay opposite Dundee to Kirkealdy was covered with oil and there were hundreds of dead birds, chiefly Guillemots, but a large number of Razorbills, Puffins, Eider and some Gulls. Brown at the Gatty Marine Laboratory in St. Andrews, collected 269 Guillemots in one day; in addition to the birds mentioned he found Solom Geese, Starlings, Sparrows, Rock-pipits and Wagtails." On another occasion, "We have . . . seen large numbers coated with oil and even dead or dying." "We have no idea where the oil comes from. In June, 1915, rumors said that an oil ship was torpedoed at the mouth of Firth, but that would in no way account for the subsequent casualties, nor was the rumor ever confirmed. We are so near a naval base that we are all well trained not to ask questions as to what takes place at sea." "We had some of the birds examined by an expert and we found that they had died of starvation."

Then from the Antipodes, Melbourne, we learn that there never is any oil floating on the water, and that "Australia . . . need not at present be considered . . ." as "there never will be" submarines in their vicinity.

While we have reasonable hope that our oil companies will exercise some care to avoid this evil, this will not be a guarantee against its occurrence and it is desirable to devise some legislative means to reach the actions of inconsiderate parties even when beyond the jurisdiction of laws regulating the conduct of men on shore.



"Died in London, Frederick Du Cane Godman," makes but a brief line in the obituary column of a provincial newspaper, but to the ornithologist, nature student and explorer it has a deeper meaning. It was Godman and a few kindred spirits, meeting informally in each other's rooms, who ultimately founded the Ornithological Union in 1858, and the ornithological journal, "Ibis." The Union now registers a big, all-world membership and the Ibis is in its 60th annual volume.

Godman's master work is undoubtedly the *Biologia Centrali-Americana*, which, after the death of his co-worker Salvin, he finished alone. The work consists of sixty-three quarto volumes, with over 1600 plates, and contains descriptions of more than 19,000 species new to science. He was at the time of his death, vice-president of the Zoological Society and a trustee of the British Museum.



## ACTIVITIES OF THE JUNIOR ANNEX

The Gull Junior Audubon Society was organized on Monday, March 17th, with headquarters at 627 Sixth Avenue, San Francisco. Mr. C. N. Douglas has taken charge of the Group and has undertaken to act as their instructor.

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The second of the series of Association lectures for the Boy Scouts of America will be given on Thursday evening, 4th inst., in the Grace M. E. Church, Seventeenth and Capp streets, at 8 p. m. Mr. Douglas will talk on the subject of "Nests and Nesting Habits."

Work on the Experimental Ground is progressing satisfactorily, and good results are being obtained. The boys have under observation not only their nesting boxes, but the following outside nests: Hutton vireo, black phoebe, bush-tit, Anna hummer and red shafted flicker.



**THE MARCH FIELD TRIP** in Golden Gate Park on the 16th ult., was favored with ideal weather, and the air was vibrant with song throughout the day. Many feathered housewives were observed building their nests.

After lunch at 12:30, the Experimental Grounds were dedicated, in co-operation with quite a number of Boy Scouts. Addresses were made by President Lastreto and Mr. Raymond Hanson. The party visited the feeding table and nesting boxes that have been installed and the outlook is fine for an interesting and valuable experience for those that are wise enough to benefit thereby.

Members present were the Misses Ames, Ayer, Cassiday, Griffin, Gunn and King; Mrs. Smith; Messrs. Bell, Douglas, Hansen, Lastreto. Among the Boy Scouts and guests were Messrs. Raymond Hanson, Ralph Vincent, Sanford Mosk, Gerald Pratt, J. E. Sullivan, Edson Cairns, Otto Pierce, George Roudebush, D. F. Teschner, G. S. Wright, J. L. Irwin and Boyle. The Misses Applegarth, Brune, Florence Witt, Henrietta Witt, Pringle and Harrit.

The birds encountered were: salt marsh yellow throat, Allen and Anna hummers, purple finch, ruby crowned kinglet, song sparrow, house finch, quail, pine siskin, bush tit, eliokadee, Nuttall sparrow, intermediate sparrow, Audubon warbler, Vigor's wren, goldfinch, dwarf hermit thrush, flicker, junco, black phoebe, robin, San Francisco towhee, blue bird, kingfisher, bi-colored blackbird, mallard, m. and f.; ruddy ducks, m. and f.; shoveller, coot, California gull, pied bill grebe, canvas back, pin-tail, m. and f.; lesser scaup, lesser snow goose, Canada goose, cackling goose and honker.

ETHEL C. AYER.

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## AUDUBON ASSOCIATION OF THE PACIFIC

### FOR THE STUDY AND THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS

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Meets second Thursday of each month in Lecture Room of California Development Board,  
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